

ILLINOIS EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

July 19, 2004

100 W. Randolph, Room 2025, Chicago

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Ann Alvarez, Roseanna Ander (for Ellen Alberding), Martha Arntson, Lori Baas, Angela Ball, Gayla Boomer, Barbara Bowman, Mary Ellen Caron, George Davis, Mark Donahue, Elizabeth Evans, Claudia Fabian, Marilu Galan, Judy Johnson, Richard Jones, Joyce Karon (for Janet Steiner), Gwendolyn Kenner Johnson (for Carol Adams), Lanita Koster, Cordelia Meyer (for Jan Maruna), Harriet Meyer, Janice Moenster, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Geoffrey Obrzut, Claudia Quigg, Sara Slaughter, Luz Maria Solis, Jerry Stermer, Jaci Vaughn (for Barry Maram), Judith Walker Kendrick, Maria Whelan, Eric Whitaker

Present by Phone: Brenda Holmes, Louanner Peters

Absent: Constance Brown, Representative Elizabeth Coulson, Representative Deborah Graham, Senator Don Harmon, Irving Harris, James Kaplan, Sam Meisels, Wanda Newell, Senator Carol Ronen, Bryan Samuels, Leo Smith

- **Welcome**

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 am by Harriet Meyer.

- **Adoption of Minutes and Preamble**

Maria Whelan made a motion to adopt the April 19 Early Learning Council meeting minutes. Luz Maria Solis seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote. Gayla Boomer made a motion to adopt the Council's Preamble, and it passed by unanimous vote.

- **Announcements**

Brenda Holmes discussed the status of the \$30 million increase proposed for the Early Childhood Block Grant for fiscal year (FY) 2005. Although the General Assembly has not voted on the FY05 state budget, the inclusion of the \$30 million looks very positive. Expanding access to high-quality early education remains a top priority for Governor Blagojevich and has enjoyed bi-partisan support from legislative leaders and members of the legislature.

Timeline and Essential Elements for Quality Preschool For All

Priority for the Coming Year

Harriet Meyer presented a projected timeline for establishing Preschool For All in Illinois, which calls for:

- Legislation by January 2005
- Initial appropriations in Spring 2006 (FY07)
- Implementation to begin Fall 2006

Essential Elements of Preschool For All

Harriet Meyer presented the *Essential Elements of Preschool For All* to the Council. Council members raised the following questions and/or comments about the essential elements:

- Joyce Thomas asked whether or not the Council will be able to shape the specifics of the Preschool For All legislation to ensure that the components that result in high-quality programs and positive outcomes for children do not get lost. Other Council members reiterated the need for these essential elements to be included in any legislation.
- Claudia Quigg asked whether the \$550 million cost estimate for Preschool For All includes infrastructure costs. Harriet Meyer replied that the \$550 million figure is only a preliminary estimate, however, whatever final total amount that is decided upon will include infrastructure costs since these components are necessary to support high-quality early education services.
- Roseanna Ander applauded the *Essential Elements* document as an explicit, public expression of the principles of the Council in defining what we mean by quality preschool for all children.
- Sara Slaughter appreciated that the importance of a comprehensive 0-5 early learning system is mentioned as an essential element because preschool is only a part of a larger system of services and supports for young children and families
- Kay Henderson suggested that language about transitions be listed as a separate element.
- Council members discussed the need for a campaign to inform the public about the benefits of quality preschool for all children. Angela Ball asked if the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) had data comparing the later school performance of children who had participated in state Prekindergarten (PreK) programs compared to at-risk children who did not receive PreK services. Kay Henderson responded that ISBE has tracked outcomes of state PreK program participants since the program's inception in 1986; however, the study does not compare at-risk children who received PreK services to other children who were eligible but did not receive services. Council members discussed the need for research of this kind to be conducted. Harriet Meyer added she plans to follow-up with the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall to investigate whether they could compare school outcomes of children who participated in state PreK to a comparison group who closely resembles the PreK population.
- Judy Walker Kendrick made a motion to approve the *Essential Elements for Preschool For All* document with the understanding that this document is a work in progress, and that how these elements are specified as a part of Illinois' Preschool For All program is critically important. Gayla Boomer seconded the motion, and it passed by unanimous vote.

Preschool (3-5) Teacher Qualifications

- Julia DeLapp led a discussion on teacher qualifications in preschool programs serving 3- and 4-year-olds on behalf of the Workforce Development and Quality Committees. The purpose of the discussion was to narrow down the teacher qualifications options for further consideration at a special meeting for members of the Early Learning Council, the Quality Committee, and the Workforce Development Committee scheduled for September 13. At that meeting, which will be facilitated by Judy Johnson, Jan Maruna, and Sam Meisels, a final recommendation on lead teacher qualifications will be developed for consideration at the October 25 Early Learning Council meeting.

- Julia reviewed handouts summarizing what is currently known from research regarding the educational level of preschool teachers on children's developmental outcomes. Generally, research studies have concluded that the presence of bachelor's level teachers with specialized training in early childhood education lead to better outcomes for young children.
- In regard to preschool teacher supply and demand, Julia summarized findings from a study conducted by the Center for the Child Care Workforce comparing staffing patterns and stability in Chicago Public Schools-funded PreK classrooms in schools and classrooms in community-based settings. This study found that teachers in community-based classrooms work longer hours per week and per year for less pay than teachers in school classrooms. Annual turnover rates were significantly higher and the number of teachers with early childhood certification were lower in community-based programs. Although the Illinois Education Research Council has recently been funded to conduct an in-depth study of PreK teacher supply and demand, results from this study will not be available for awhile. The supply of Type 04 teachers is extremely variable by locality, although schools generally have fewer problems hiring certified teachers than do community-based programs.
- Julia then presented the four options listed below regarding teacher qualifications in community-based settings for discussion. It was assumed that teachers in school settings would be required to have Type 04 early childhood education teacher certification.
 - A) Require all Preschool For All programs to employ Type 04 certified teachers (the current standard in the state PreK program)
 - B) Stipulate a minimum requirement for teachers (i.e. bachelor's or associate degree) but require that all teachers obtain Type 04 certification over the next 5-10 years (phase-in plan)
 - C) Allow community-based Preschool For All teachers to have a bachelor's degree in a related field and specialized early childhood coursework (a common core of between 15-21 credits)
 - D) Allow community-based Preschool For All teachers to have less than a bachelor's degree with some college credits in early childhood
- Many Council members expressed concern about any option that did not include a bachelor's degree for lead teachers given the conclusive research that bachelor's level teachers have a significant impact on school readiness outcomes for children. Some members were concerned that allowing different qualifications for teachers in schools and community-based settings would solidify a two-tier system of quality.
- Barbara Bowman suggested that any option include the requirement that teachers pass the Illinois Basic Skills Test.
- Cordelia Meyer suggested that over the longer term, a competencies-based system based on standards is the most effective way to ensure the delivery of high-quality early education.
- Judy Johnson expressed support for maintaining the requirement that at some point teachers be mandated to obtain Type 04 certification (Option A or B). Current certification standards signal that teachers have content knowledge in early childhood education pedagogy and child development, and the general education needed to pass the Illinois Basic Skills Test. When the PreK program started in 1986, bachelor's level teachers were given five years to obtain certification. Although that deadline had to be extended numerous times, all PreK teachers met the goal by 1998. Judy expressed confidence that the Council could develop parity in compensation for teachers in different settings, as well as effective strategies to attract and retain well-qualified educators.

- In regard to data about the current demand and supply of Type 04 PreK teachers, Kay Henderson stated that ISBE requires specific information on teacher certification status, although they don't have solid data on the projected numbers of Type 04 teachers needed. Kay mentioned the preliminary study recently begun by the Illinois Education Research Council.
- Numerous Council members expressed concern about any option that did not include ample phase-in time to allow current early care and education program staff to acquire increased educational qualifications. Members also noted the need for funding, supports, and professional development plans for teachers to allow them to meet baccalaureate and/or certification requirements. Lanita Koster suggested that we concentrate on best practice strategies for preparing and retaining teachers. Joyce Thomas suggested that we carefully consider the current educational qualifications of teachers in Illinois' child care and Head Start programs as we develop a final recommendation.
- Mary Ellen Caron requested that we get information on centers that do not have bachelor's degreed teachers (e.g. child outcomes, measures of quality).
- Janice Moenster urged the Council to work with the teachers' unions on this issue.
- Carolyn Newberry Schwartz reiterated the importance of this based on their experience in Oak Park.
- A motion was made to eliminate Option A and focus on Options B and C. A few Council members expressed concern about eliminating Option D pending further discussion about whether higher educational qualifications are attainable for all lead teachers in Preschool For All programs. This will occur at the September 13 meeting.

Committee Recommendations for Council Consideration

Definition of "At-Risk" for 0-3

On behalf of the Quality Committee's 0-3 Workgroup, Karen Yarbrough shared with Council members the following recommendation for determining eligibility for Preschool For All programs serving at-risk infants and toddlers that had been approved by the Executive Committee:

- Any pregnant woman or family with children age birth to three meeting income eligibility criteria for the state child care subsidy program will automatically be eligible for the program.

OR

- Any pregnant woman or family with children age birth to three with any three of the risk factors listed below will be eligible for the program:
 - Single parent
 - Teen parent
 - Low parental education (less than a high school diploma or GED)
 - Family with language barriers
 - Mentally ill or developmentally disabled parent or developmentally delayed child
 - Indicated or active DCFS case
 - Domestic violence issues
 - Substance abuse issues

Gayla Boomer suggested changing “meeting income eligibility criteria for the state child care subsidy program” to 50% of current State Median Income.

3-5 Preschool For All Program Components

On behalf of the Quality Committee’s 3-5 Workgroup, Ms. Johnson presented numerous Preschool For All Program Components for 3-5-year-olds. Claudia Quigg requested that the wording under **Ages of Children Served** be changed to clarify that all young children with Individualized Education Plans who are not in kindergarten be eligible to participate in Preschool For All programs. With this revision, the Committee’s recommendations were approved by the Council.

3-5 Preschool For All Eligible Service Providers

Harriet Meyer led a discussion on behalf of the Expansion Committee regarding eligible service providers for the 3-5 Preschool For All program. Since the list of eligible service providers is very broad, in order to be inclusive and not unintentionally leave out entities, it was suggested that either eligible service providers be defined broadly without including a specific list of entities, or that the language be changed to “Eligible providers shall include, *but are not limited to:*” If a list is included, Maria Whelan moved that park districts and family child care associations and networks be added. Barbara Bowman made a motion to approve the Committee’s recommendations incorporating the above revisions. The motion was seconded and passed by unanimous vote.

Program Alignment/Diminishing Barriers to Blending Funding

On behalf of the Linkage and Integration Committee, Jerry Stermer asked the Council to consider the three recommendations described below, which were approved by the Council:

- Enhance the quality and stability of approved collaboration programs under the Child Care Collaboration Program by disbursing child care funding through an upfront funding mechanism rather than through monthly fee for service reimbursement. To ensure fiscal accountability, use a system of quarterly reconciliation reporting and tracking similar to those used by ISBE under the Early Childhood Education Block Grant program. *The Committee continues to work in conjunction with IDHS and ISBE to draft a detailed approach for consideration.*
- State and federal funding agencies (IDHS, DCFS, ISBE, and U.S. DHHS Region V) should identify opportunities for working in teams and sharing information, forms, etc. to reduce duplicative program and fiscal monitoring and auditing site visits and paperwork. *Louanner Peters’ office is already working on this issue, and the Committee plans to support and monitor work in this area.*
- IDHS should develop a pilot project in a wide variety of communities (suburban, rural, urban) that gives parents who work and/or attend school full-time during non-traditional hours the option of selecting full-time care during traditional daytime business hours (Parents who make this voluntary choice would pay privately for additional care needed during the hours they work or are in school). Any evaluation of the pilot should consider quality and stability of care accessed in addition to the fiscal impact. Parents should be adequately informed of their options. *The IDHS Child Care & Development Bureau has agreed to pilot the full-time option to expand access to early learning and educational opportunities and stable care arrangements for children whose parents work non-traditional hours.*

Nomenclature Research

On behalf of the Workforce Development Committee, Cordelia Meyer presented an update on creating a common nomenclature for roles in Illinois' early childhood programs. Cordelia presented highlights from a 1-page fact sheet about the need for a common nomenclature for the early childhood field that defines roles - and levels within roles - by educational qualifications, scope of responsibilities, experience required, and ongoing professional development required for remaining in a role. Reasons for pursuing this task and a set of principles to guide the process were highlighted. Next steps include seeking grant funding or working with a university on a pro bono basis to conduct a job analysis of roles across the early childhood field in Illinois, in conjunction with Human Resources experts who are familiar with how other professions have handled job description and nomenclature issues and a review of studies in this area. Maria Whelan urged caution in moving forward to ensure that existing titles are accommodated in a final nomenclature so that current practitioners are not demoted.

Upcoming Meetings

Teacher Qualifications Meeting (Optional)

Monday, September 13, 2004

2:30 - 4:30 pm

Videoconference room locations in Chicago and Springfield as follows:

Chicago

James R. Thompson Center, Room 9-040
100 W. Randolph Street, 9th Floor
Chicago, IL

Springfield

Capitol Development Board
Oxtoby Board Room, Room 349-C
Stratton Office Building, 3rd Floor
401 S. Spring Street
Springfield, IL 62706

Early Learning Council Meeting

Monday, October 25, 2004

10:00am - 1:00pm

Michael Bilandic Building
(Old State of Illinois Building)
160 N. LaSalle, Room N502
Chicago, IL

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.